

Carson Principle by Ron White

One of my fondest childhood memories is watching The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson. When I was 7 years old, I would get a tape recorder and put it against the television and record Johnny's monologue. I remember running into my parents' room because I wanted my mom to come and listen to the "funny man." When she walked into the living room, she did laugh.

However, it was not at Johnny Carson; instead, she laughed that her 7-year-old son was convinced he had discovered Johnny before anyone else in the family!

Perhaps it should be of no surprise that, decades later, I make my living delivering monologues, much like my childhood mentor. Although I am a keynote speaker and not a comedian, I did originally try to be a comedian... but everyone just laughed at me!

As I listened to Johnny's friends after he passed away a few years ago, they all talked about what people from ages 7 to 97 loved about him. Do you know what they said? They said that he:

- Let others talk.(In other words, Johnny was the star by not always turning the spotlight on himself; he let others shine.)
- Listened. (Not only did he let others talk, but he also listened!)
- Made jokes, but never at the expense of his guests.
- Saw the value in bringing the common man on his show.
- Wanted to see others succeed.
- Was almost funnier when his jokes bombed because he just rolled with it.

Johnny Carson understood that if his guests were successful and funny, that made him a star. He spent his interviews letting others have the spotlight.

Here is the life lesson: Understand what I call the "Carson Principle." This principle says that if you want to make your life successful, then make those around you successful.

Spend time listening to the least among you. The "Carson Principle" also goes on to say that if you spend your efforts drawing attention to yourself, it will actually backfire. Focusing on others will catapult you to success. This may not be monetary success, but it will surely mean relational success. Finally, the "Carson Principle" says that it is OK to fail, and don't take your failures too seriously.>

Mr. Carson, I still have your decades-old monologues on cassette tape. Although I was not aware of it at a young age, you taught me a lot about life and success. Thank you.